



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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NOAA ANNOUNCES LIGHTNING SAFETY AWARENESS WEEK, EMPHASIZES RISK REDUCTION ***"Leon the Lightning Lion" Joins Effort To Educate Children***

Reducing the risk of being struck by lightning is the focus of national Lightning Safety Awareness Week, June 18-24. Lightning is most common in the summer months, but can be a hazard throughout the year. And although most lightning victims are struck outdoors, lightning poses a threat to those indoors as well.

"All thunderstorms produce potentially deadly and destructive lightning. Knowing lightning is in the forecast and being prepared to react to the first sound of thunder are the initial key safety steps," said Brig. Gen. David L. Johnson, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), director of NOAA's National Weather Service.

If you are outdoors and see darkening skies or hear thunder, seek a sturdy, enclosed shelter immediately, such as a building or hardtop automobile. "Don't wait for rain to start falling to seek shelter from the storm — by then it could be too late," says John Jensenius, lightning expert with NOAA's National Weather Service. "Lightning causalities frequently occur before the rain begins and soon after the rain ends. Wait at least 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder before returning outside."

If you are indoors during a thunderstorm, try not to use corded appliances and electronics, such as computers and phones, as well as plumbing. Electrical wiring and pipes can provide a path for lightning to enter an enclosed structure.

"Lightning is a cunning and powerful force of nature. It is important to realize there are no guaranteed safe shelters — rather only ways to reduce your chances of becoming a victim," adds Jensenius.

Last year in the United States, lightning was reported to have killed at least 43 people. On average, lightning is responsible for 66 fatalities annually. Additionally, hundreds of people are injured by lightning. "Lightning survivors are often left with debilitating health effects, such as permanent nerve damage or brain injury," says Dr. Mary Ann Cooper, professor at the University of Illinois's department of emergency medicine.

To stress the importance of lightning safety for people of all ages, the Lightning Safety Alliance created a cartoon character, Leon the Lightning Lion, who promotes the slogan "When thunder roars, go indoors!" created by a private group, Struckbylightning.org. Both organizations are among the NOAA partners providing public information about lightning safety. Leon is featured in a new children's coloring page that can be printed from NOAA's lightning safety Web site.

The National Weather Service is part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with our federal partners and more than 60 countries and the

European Commission to develop a global earth observation network that is as integrated as the planet it observes.

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On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA's National Weather Service: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov>

NOAA Lightning Safety: <http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov>

NOAA Lightning Safety (en Espanol): <http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/espanol.htm>